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ABSTRACT

Continuing vocational training (CVT) was officially introduced and codified in France in 1971 to promote individuals' employability, career development, and job flexibility. Self-directed learning was initially considered among the most important instruments for its implementation in addition to employer-directed CVT. Despite increased and diversified efforts to develop self-directed CVT over the past 24 years, it remains a relatively marginal and continually diminishing part of the CVT system. Reasons for this fact include the growing dominance of enterprise-oriented CVT and the insufficiency of the compensatory actions taken by state and local authorities. Improving the performance of self-directed learning within France's CVT system requires that it be merged with the whole initial vocational education and training system and the capacity of all components of the merged system be integrated to achieve the following objectives: (1) develop "transversal competencies" (core skills and key qualifications) that empower individuals in shaping technology, managing their own learning, and transferring skills to complex work tasks; (2) promote curriculum flexibility over time and across individuals and space; (3) provide different learning methods at different times and in different institutions to meet the needs of individuals and groups of individuals; and (4) facilitate access to learning and transfer between different levels and routes of learning. (Contains 22 references.) (Author/MN)

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(Section 7: Self-directed lifelong learning)

# On the performance of self-directed learning within the French continuing vocational training system

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## ABSTRACT

*As a complement to initial education, "Continuing Vocational Training (CVT)" was officially introduced and codified in 1971 to promote the individuals' employability, career development and job flexibility. Self-directed learning was initially considered as one of the most important instruments for its implementation, in addition to the employer-directed continuing vocational training.*

*The first section of the paper presents a general assessment of the French existing self-directed CVT in comparison to the employer-directed CVT over the last twenty five years. An example of effective practice will be presented and assessed. On the whole and in spite of the increased and diversified efforts put into its development during this period, the relative weight of self-directed learning in the whole CVT system remains relatively marginal and in continuous diminution. This is mainly due to the combined effect of the following phenomena:*

- *The growing dominance of the enterprise (directly and indirectly) oriented CVT activity which is still limited nearly exclusively to permanent "hard core" employees with high qualifications.*
- *The insufficiency of compensatory actions taken by the state and local authorities. Due to the pressure of rising unemployment and exclusion, the state is more and more constrained to take punctual emergency actions concerning professional and social integration, which do not contribute to the development of individual initiatives.*

*The second section of the paper explores (within a four-dimension-based conceptual framework) a range of possible ways to improve the performance of the system. To improve its effectiveness, it has to merge with the whole initial vocational education and training system and integrate the capacity:*

- *To develop "transversal competencies" (i.e. core skills or key qualifications) which empower individuals in shaping technology, in managing their own learning and in transferring skills to complex work tasks.*
- *To promote curricula flexibility over time, across individuals and space.*
- *To provide different learning methods at different times and in different institutions to meet the needs of individuals and groups of individuals.*
- *To facilitate access to learning and transfer between different levels and routes of learning.*



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# On the performance of self-directed learning within the French continuing vocational training system

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## INTRODUCTION

Promoted as a complement to the initial education system during the 1960s, "Continuing Vocational Training (CVT)" was officially introduced and codified by the 1971 Act, July 26th . It was assigned two intertwined basic sets of objectives (F. Berton & G. Podevin, 1991; P. Besnard & B. Liétard, 1995; N. Terrot, 1997):

- The first set focuses on the individual's occupational activity by enhancing equal chances for access to CVT which promotes employability, mobility, job flexibility and career development.
- The second set of objectives concerns the promotion of the individual's social and cultural activities.

The CVT system was initially designed to deal with vocational education and training of workers. It has remained, since its introduction in the early 70s, a combination of two basic approaches to learning:

- Self-directed learning (SDL);
- Employer-directed learning (EDL).

The effective practice within the implementation stage of this system (i.e. CVT system) was expected:

- To reduce the exclusion, generated by the selectivity and insufficient learning path fluidity within the dominant initial education and training system;
- To promote equal chances for access to further education and training;
- To bridge the gap between learning and production activities.

This paper is an attempt to present in the first section a general assessment of the French existing self-directed continuing vocational training (SD-CVT) in comparison with the employer-directed continuing vocational training (ED-

CVT) over the last two and half decades. An important example of effective practice within the French self-directed CVT will be presented and assessed.

The second section of the paper explores, within a contextualised-four-dimensions conceptual framework, a range of possible ways to integrate CVT to initial education and to improve its performance through the promotion of self-directed lifelong leaning.

## I- PERFORMANCE OF SELF-DIRECTED CVT

As a general concept, self-directed learning has developed within the framework of the general move towards a flexibility-based approach to economic and learning activities launched during the early 70s (cf. P. Arestis & E. Paliginis, 1995; M.DIF, 1998a and 1998b). According to this flexibility-based paradigm, the promotion of labour flexibility is obtainable through the development of "constrained individualisation of lifelong learning" i.e. contextualised self-directed lifelong learning. The latter points to the responsibility of individuals in controlling the formation of their own "subjective biographies". It is a self-initiated and shaped learning under the constraint that the individuals have to adapt continuously their knowledge and skills to contingent and unpredictable demands of the labour market, at a time of rapid social, economic and technological change (cf. A. Walther and B. Sauber, 1998; M. DIF, 1998b).

In France, this concept is implemented through the first component of CVT system introduced in 1971: Employee-directed continuing vocational training which is referred to in this paper as "self-directed continuing vocational training (SD-CVT)". The second component is "the employer-directed continuing vocational training (ED-CVT) ". The first part of this section gives an overview of SD-CVT versus ED-CVT. Then, in the second part of the section, an example of effective practice will be presented and assessed within the framework of SD-CVT. The latter is usually referred to in France as CIF *(Congé Individuel de Formation)* i.e. a leave for self-directed continuing vocational training (LSD-CVT).

### 1- SD-CVT VERSUS ED-CVT:

Self-directed continuing vocational training (SD-CVT) is considered as an employee's choice and a preference guided system. But its real implementation has always been dependent on the importance of the financial constraint. It is

usually carried out through two main formally institutionalised vocational training regimes:

- Leave for self-directed continuing vocational training: LSD-CVT (*Congé Individuel de formation*:CIF), which will be examined, later on in this section, as an example of effective practice within the general framework of SD-CVT.
- Leave for competencies evaluation: LCE (*Congé de Bilan de Compétences:* CBC), which can be taken by any employee who possesses a working experience of five years, of which one year at least was with the last employer. It allows its beneficiaries to have their vocational and personal qualifications evaluated and be able to state clearly their own competencies and career projects. Its costs are taken into charge in the same way as those linked to LSD-CVT. The performance of this regime is not examined in this paper.

If the number of beneficiaries of these two regimes varies on average between 40,000 and 70,000 per year, the whole number of people concerned by SD-CVT (outside these two regimes ) constitute at present over half a million. In fact, it is extremely difficult to determine their exact number due to the diversity of institutions involved in the system; For instance (cf. J.-F. Germe and F. Pottier, 1996):

- Over 160,000 trainees (representing about 12% of the people concerned) pursue their courses at the university or simply registered (at their own expense) for continuing vocational training courses.
- About 90,000 people are pursuing on a higher level their evening courses in "Specialised Vocational Education Institutions" and "Associated Centres" linked to the National Institute for Technical Arts (CNAM).
- With the intensified move towards more and more decentralised vocational education and training system (since the early 1980s), an increasing number of vocational activities (generally, in favour of youth professional integration) have been undertaken locally by City Councils. Moreover, a large variety of associations (social, cultural, religious and even political associations) are involved locally in promoting vocational and educational activities for adults.
- Vocational colleges linked to the Ministry of Education and operating through a strong local network called "GRETA groups" are involved in workers' vocational training. In 1993 for instance, 35,000 workers were trained according to their own initiatives.
- In addition, about 200,000 individuals, especially young people who prematurely left school are registered at the National Centre for Education by Correspondence, to finish their studies or prepare a competitive examination for employment in the public sector.

As for the employer-oriented continuing vocational training (ED-CVT), it is generally carried out through the company's vocational training scheme. It includes all kinds of short term and medium term vocational training decided and implemented by the company in favour of its employees. It is the result of a concerted action aiming the promotion of internal labour flexibility. The scheme is financed through firms' obligatory contributions to a vocational training fund (1% of wage bill).

The contributions of enterprises to the development of a vocational training system adapted to their needs, have been continuously increasing during the whole period of this new era since the 1971 Act. For instance, between 1980 and 1994, the number of trainees financed by companies had doubled. The amount of money put in by companies was very important: 47 million francs in 1994 representing 3.3% of the total wage bill (about the double of their legal financial obligation) of firms employing over 10 million people.

However, the continuing vocational training developed (directly and indirectly) by employers is mainly characterised by its short-term nature with the aim of adapting "core employees" to their changing functional tasks (cf. J.-F. Germe and F. Pottier, 1996).

In the meantime, the rise of unemployment and problems of professional integration for young people since the 1970s, had forced the state and local authorities to take the initiative of developing special vocational inclusion programmes in favour of excluded active people. As a result, the number of trainees taken in charge by these specific action programmes have doubled in the last 15 years. It has gone up from about one million to over 2 million trainees. Here as well, the financial means used were relatively important (33,3 billion francs on average in 1994, for instance). In addition, the average period of training is longer than that offered by firms (cf. J.-F. Germe and F. Pottier, 1996).

On the whole, about 6 million (out of 19.8 million employees) benefit each year from both regimes of "continuing vocational training" financed by firms, the state and local authorities.

However, in spite of the increased and diversified efforts put into the development of self-directed continuing vocational training since 1971 (cf. P. Béret and A. Dupray, 1998), its relative weight in the whole continuing vocational training system is relatively marginal and in continuous diminution. In fact, the number of people trained within this sub-system has gone down from over 25% at the end of the 1970s to only about 8% of the beneficiaries from CVT during the 90s (cf. J.-F. Germe and F. Pottier, 1996).

The marginalisation of self-directed continuing vocational training system is mainly due to the combined effect of the following phenomena:

- The growing dominance of the employer-directed continuing vocational training activity, which is still limited nearly exclusively to "hard core employees" with high qualifications.
- The insufficiency of compensatory actions taken by the state and local authorities. Due to the pressure of rising unemployment and exclusion, the state is more and more constrained to take only punctual emergency actions concerning professional and social inclusion, which do not really contribute to the development of individual initiatives.

## 2- LSD-CVT AS AN EXAMPLE OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE:

After a brief presentation of the general characteristics of this regime and its founding principles, the effectiveness of LSD-CVT (a leave for self-directed continuing vocational training) will be evaluated in terms of its contribution to the fulfilment of its initially assigned basic objectives and missions.

### 2.1- LSD-CVT regime and its basic objectives:

Officially introduced in 1971, LSD-CVT regime was designed to allow any worker, over his or her working life, to take a paid leave (under minimum requirements adapted to the nature of work contracts) to pursue self initiated and directed training programmes unlinked to the company's training scheme with the guarantee of maintaining the work contracts during the training periods (cf. J.-J. Paul, 1992; P. Guilloux, 1996).

This regime was created to promote free choice and equal access to learning and training by introducing three interdependent guarantees (cf. P. Gahéry, 1996; P. Guilloux, 1996; Ph. Méhaut, 1996):

- A guarantee of free-choice;
- A guarantee of equal access;
- A guarantee of autonomous funding and management.

#### *2.1.1- Free choice guarantee:*

The beneficiary of a leave is free to choose any type of training programme outside the enterprise's usual training scheme. The training chosen can be vocational with a variety of ultimate aims: a promotion within the same company, a job conversion and mobility or just a simple adaptation to changes in technology and labour market structures. The training programme can also be

non vocational with the aim of allowing the trainee to acquire general qualifications and/or get more involved in the social and cultural life.

***2.1.2- Equal access guarantee:***

It guarantees non exclusion-based access which means that all workers with different types of work contracts can benefit from this regime. Originally, LSD-CVT was designed and implemented exclusively in favour of workers recruited according to non limited duration work contract. It took twenty years for this regime to adapt to the situation of precarious employment. In December 1991, it was officially extended to include employees with fixed duration contracts and temporary workers. Hence, by taking into consideration different employment conditions, the minimum formal access requirements were adapted to the three following cases:

- Case of unlimited duration employment;
- Case of fixed duration employment;
- Case of temporary employment.

*a)-LSD-CVT in the case of an unlimited duration work contract:*

Non limited duration work contract was the first and the only situation taken into consideration by LSD-CVT regime in 1971. In this case, any employee, with a working experience of two years of which one year at least within the last firm, can ask for a vocational training leave. The duration of the leave does not generally exceed a full time working year (or 1200 hours for a part time leave) which is counted for as a working experience. If this kind of leave has the advantage of allowing the trainee to return to the company, once the training is completed, it does not oblige the employer to recognise the acquired qualifications.

*b)-LSD-CVT in the case of a fixed duration work contract:*

In this case taken care of by LSD-CVT regime since 1991, any worker with a working experience of two years, of which at least 4 months were acquired during the last year, can benefit from a non work contract vocational training leave with a salary whose amount varies between 80 and 90% of the last received salary. The applicants address their applications directly to the parity organism in charge of funds collection and management (OPACIF) in which their last employers are financially involved (through their annual contribution to the fund: 1% of wages paid to this kind of employees).

*c)-LSD-CVT in the case of a temporary employment:*

In December 1991, LSD-CVT regime was extended to cover this most precarious situation of employment. In this case, any employee who completed, as a temporary worker, 560 hours of which 360 hours within the last temporary employment company, can apply for a vocational training leave. Its financial

coverage is taken into charge by a training insurance fund for temporary employment ( called FAF) created mainly through the annual contribution of temporary employment companies ( 0,25% of the total wage bill).

***2.1.3- A guarantee of autonomous funding and management:***

Since 1984, the LSD-CVT is financed through a special fund held and run by an independent parity organism (called OPACIF). This fund is fed by an obligatory contribution from the employers representing at the moment 0,20 % of the total wages paid to employees. The state takes into charge a part of the training costs. However, the state contribution is variable over time and still, generally, limited to financing special cases of vocational training leave such as long term training leaves and the training leaves within small companies (with less than 10 employees).

The whole coverage of training costs (trainee's salary, training fees, transport and lodging) varies from 60 to 90% depending on the importance of the training content and its duration.

The financing capacity of the fund is getting more and more limited due to its decreased revenues and the increased number of applicants. At present, the parity organism for vocational training (OPACIF) can take into charge only 20000 trainees on average per year (i.e. 70% of applications received). In addition, the state decided in December 1993, to allocate 50% per annum of the funds collected and managed by OPACIF to finance a new sub-system of ED-CVT called "time capitalised continuing vocational training: TC-CVT" (*Capital Temps de Formation: CTF*).

**2.2- performance of LSD-CVT regime:**

The performance of LSD-CVT regime is analysed in terms of its contribution to a set of test-criteria which stem directly from the basic principles of its founding missions and objectives. These test-criteria are twofold:

- Contributing to the reduction of unequal access to learning;
- Contributing to the promotion of labour mobility within and between firms.

***2.2.1- Contribution to the reduction of unequal access to learning:***

On the basis of a survey carried out by a group of French regional centres associated to "the Centre for Research on Employment and Qualifications: CEREQ" in 1985, J.-J. Paul conducted an empirical study for this particular purpose in 1989. The study revealed that the initial inequalities which characterised access to employer-directed CVT in the early 70s had doubled during the first fifteen years of its implementation. Moreover, it was observed that the beneficiaries of traditional ED-CVT were dominantly well paid "core

employees" with previous high qualifications working in big companies with at least 500 employees. On the other hand, the same study showed that access to LSD-CVT is not at all affected by the structural characteristics of the enterprise, especially those linked to the size of firms (cf. J.-J. Paul, 1989).

***2.2.2- Contribution to the promotion of labour mobility:***

There are, in this context, three kinds of labour mobility to be taken into consideration:

- The promotional mobility i.e. promotion through the hierarchy within the enterprise and having more access to a higher social and professional status.
- The professional mobility i.e. mobility through different professions and specialities.
- Mobility within and between enterprises i.e. internal and external mobility.

*a)- Contribution to the development of promotional mobility*

Due to the exogenous move towards "flat organisational structures" of the firm since early 70s, the contribution of the CVT system to hierarchical upward mobility has undergone an important diminution in favour horizontal mobility. The unfavourable effect of this exogenous phenomenon to the CVT system has been observed by a national sample survey on vocational qualifications and training (VQT : *enquête FQP*) carried out every five years by the National Board for Statistics (INSEE) to be more significant in employer-directed CVT than in LSD-CVT. J.-J. Paul's study concerning the performance of LSD-CVT regime, had in fact confirmed this differentiated effect. It showed that the contribution of LSD-CVT regime to upward mobility through the firm's organisational hierarchy is higher than the average performance of the whole CVT. The observed evolution in this direction was confirmed by the results of the INSEE's last survey in 1993 on vocational qualifications and training (VQT).

As for the promotion of access to a higher occupational and social status (including a required higher level of qualifications), the contribution of self-directed CVT has been increasingly at a higher level than that of employer-directed CVT since their introduction in 1971. In this context, it was observed by both, J.-J. Paul's study and the INSEE's successive surveys on vocational qualification and training, that LSD-CVT has been continuously contributing to the beneficiaries' attainment in terms of acquiring higher qualifications and higher status in the social and professional hierarchy.

*b)- Contribution to the promotion of horizontal professional mobility:*

LSD-CVT is considered as one of the most important instruments of CVT system, which allows effectively all kinds of workers to develop independently their career in the same profession. The attachment of employees to develop

their own career within the same profession has been confirmed by 41,1% of cases covered by J.-J. Paul's study in 1989. Only 20,7% of the beneficiaries tried to change their initial projects with a success rate of about 50%.

*c)- Contribution to the promotion of internal and external mobility:*
If LSD-CVT induced promotional mobility can be either internal (within the same enterprise) or external (between different firms), the professional mobility does not necessarily imply the absence of internal or external mobility. On the whole, LSD-CVT, has been observed to contribute to the promotion of workers' mobility inside and outside the firm (cf. J.-J. Paul, 1989; INSEE's Survey of 1985 and 1993 on VQT). Moreover, LSD-CVT has a tendency to intensify the same kind of workers' already acquired mobility. However, if internal mobility is non existent or insufficiently developed, LSD-CVT contribution to the promotion of external mobility will be more important (cf. J.-J. Paul, 1989)

## II- A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM

If the performance of SD-CVT through LSD-CVT (in particular) is highly superior to that of ED-CVT, the dominance of the latter in terms of output and financial resources used represents an important factor which continues to undermine the effectiveness of the whole existing CVT system. Moreover, as a result of a long traditional separation between education and production spheres, CVT system is still on the whole disconnected from the initial general and vocational education system. Providing a bridge between the two basic systems (CVT and initial education systems) was one of the main objectives of the reforms launched during the last decade. For instance, the development of a variety of "alternating vocational training" regimes and involving, equally, firms and local authorities (including their social partners: trade unions, associations,...) in the whole process were the main elements of this reform.

In order to explore a range of possible ways of integrating CVT to initial education and improving its performance, a contextualised four-dimensions conceptual framework is used (cf. European Commission, 1994; Graham Attwell, 1998).

The contextualisation of the system allows it to incorporate and respond continuously to the effect of new challenging exogenous and endogenous factors, namely those linked to:

- Globalisation of markets and competitiveness.
- The generalisation of the flexibility paradigms to all activity sectors: production processes, labour market, education and training systems.

- Rise of unemployment, precarious employment, social and cultural exclusion.
- Rapid change and an increasing use of technology, mainly in the area of information and communication.
- Increased importance of the tertiary sector which employs at present over two thirds of workers in France.
- Emergence of new forms of organisations, especially those linked to learning organisations as a model for the development of the enterprise.

This contextualised conceptual framework integrates four interdependent dimensions of the flexibility-based approach to education and training. It has the advantage of allowing through an extended SD-CVT approach to all kinds of learning for an effective integration between CVT and initial education (general and vocational). The dimensions considered are (cf. EC, Petra Conf. Report, 1994; G. Attwell, 1998; A. Brown and G. Attwell, 1998):
- Competency flexibility
- Curricula flexibility.
- Learning process flexibility.
- Learning path fluidity.

## 1- COMPETENCY FLEXIBILITY:

Competency flexibility refers to the need to equip trainees with "transversal competencies" i.e. "core skills or key qualifications", to be able to perform a wide range of work roles and respond easily to any new work organisation. They have the advantage of empowering individuals in shaping technology, in managing their own learning and in transferring skills to complex work tasks. Four dimensions of transversal competencies are usually identified (G. Attwell, 1996):
- **Technical competency:** It includes a minimum required level of technical and economic knowledge to fulfil a certain number of existing and potential tasks or activities linked the individual's professional career development.
- **Methodological competency** such as self-organised learning ability, including the ability to react to unforeseen circumstances.
- **Social competency** which refers to the individual's capacity to communicate, to co-operate, to work within a team and to accept responsibility.
- **Personal and behavioural competency** which includes the individual's flexibility, motivation, reliability, self-confidence and self-esteem.

In spite of an important proliferation of specialised curricula and certification, in France, within the initial education system in general and in vocational education in particular, there is a growing tendency since the mid-

eighties to develop transversal competencies through mainly the following segments:

- Within the initial vocational education system, transversal curricula and certification were developed through the creation of a "transversal vocational baccalaureate". The most representative example in this case, was the introduction in 1988 of a "bio-industry baccalaureate (BIT)" by a joint action of the education and agricultural ministries. It covers three domains of industrial activity: Food processing, pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries (F. Dauty and H. Brunet, 1997).
- In the continuing vocational training system, transversal competencies and certification are generally delivered in many public and private institutions, especially through SD-CVT different regimes.

## 2- CURRICULA FLEXIBILITY:

Curricular flexibility is considered, in the context of this four-dimensions conceptual framework, as one of the major instruments used to implement and develop individualised transversal competencies. Generally, there is a distinction between three types of curricular flexibilisation (cf. G. Attwell, 1996):

- **Flexibilisation over time** which promotes within the VET System the capacity to update continuously its curricula contents in response to changing skills needs.
- **Flexiblisation across individuals** which involves tailoring VET programmes to respond to the individual choice and meet particulars needs of a certain category of learners especially those disadvantaged.
- **Flexibilisation over space** which contributes to the promotion of the VET's capacity to adapt curricula to the local labour market and local circumstances.

In France, like some other European countries, curricular flexibility is generally implemented through "transversal modularization" (including credit accumulation and transfers). At present, the latter is used to a variable degree in many higher education and training institutions.

## 3- LEARNING PROCESS FLEXIBILITY:

It refers to the ability of the system to adapt its delivery to meet the learning needs of individuals and groups of individuals by providing different learning methods and techniques at different times and within different delivery institutions.

### 3.1- provision of different learning methods at different times:

It has the advantage of taking into consideration the learners availability and their particular social and working conditions through, for instance, the provision of adapted evening courses, open university programmes and teaching by correspondence. In addition, it enhances access to learning for adults in general and disadvantaged people in particular.

### 3.2- provision of different learning methods within different institutions:

It promotes:

- Collaboration between different actors involved in the delivery of learning, either as a basis for the implementation of certain transversal programmes and certification or for dividing responsibilities in jointly-planned and delivered modular courses.
- Collaboration between institutions which provide education and training and employers. This kind of co-operation is highly developed in the case of the French "alternating vocational training: AVT" system, which was launched in 1984 to bridge the traditionally missing link between two spheres: Initial education sphere and the production sphere. AVT represents a real alternation between school-based vocational training and in-company work experience. It is implemented through a variety of AVT contracts such as: the orientation contract, the qualification contract and the adaptation contract.

## 4- LEARNING PATH FLUIDITY:

It refers to the flexibilisation of learning tracks through the promotion of equal chances for access to learning and the development of an easier transfer between different levels and routes of learning.

### 4.1- promotion of equal chances for access to learning:

Equal chances for access to learning is usually promoted through the creation of "putting-on-a-learning track" specific programmes, especially for disadvantaged or excluded people. One of the most effective programmes experimented, in this context, for two years (1992-1994), was a "Programme of Active Access to Qualifications and Employment: PAQUE". It is a national programme of an active preparation for qualifications and employment of non qualified young people (from 16 to 25 years old) who are in precarious situation and unable to have any direct access to qualifications and employment. Launched in June 1992, "PAQUE" programme is considered as a preparatory stage which allows a young person excluded by a high selectivity within the

existing general education and VET systems to benefit from "Youth-SD-CVT" programmes ("CIF-jeunes") introduced within the general framework of the initial vocational training system (cf. C. Mathey-Pierre, 1997).

"PAQUE"'s intermediary objectives are threefold:

- The acquisition of basic knowledge (learning to read, to write, to reason logically, to communicate,...).
- Intensive and active learning about different (existing and potential) occupational activities and their sectors (i.e. preparation for taking vocational training or searching for well targeted jobs).
- Social accompaniment.

The ultimate aims of the programme "PAQUE" are considered as success indicators. Therefore, at the end of the training period, the beneficiary will be able :

- to have access to a vocational training, (through signing a vocational qualification contract or an apprenticeship contract, ...);
- or to acquire the status of a vocational trainee;
- or to find a regular job ( and have access, through the acquired basic knowledge, to further qualifications and career development).

On the whole, the programme "PAQUE" contributed effectively to the opening up of progression opportunities for vocational and occupational routes in favour of young people excluded by the selectivity of the existing VET system (cf. C. Mathey-Pierre, 1997). In spite of this performance, the programme was abandoned in September 1994 for its supposed high costs.

**4.2- promotion of transfer between different levels and routes of learning:**

Through facilitating transfer between different levels and routes of learning, this dimension has the advantage of contributing on one hand, to the integration between general and vocational education within the initial education system and on the other, between the latter and CVT system.

***4.2.1- Learning path fluidity within the French initial education system (cf. J.-L. Kirsch, 1994):***

- Pathway fluidity between general and vocational education is higher than that between general and technical education at a secondary school level: Passage from general to the vocational track is about 27%, against only 16% to the technical track. At college level, this fluidity towards both vocational and technical is far lower (less than 10%). Concerning access to higher education, about a fifth of general baccalaureate-holders choose to go for a university diploma in technology (DUTs) and a high technician diploma (BTS).

Moreover, the rate of continued studies among DUT-holders was 50% in 1990 and 30% for BTS-holders.

- As for learning path fluidity between vocational education and technical education, the passage in the direction of the latter, after a vocational studies diploma through entry into an adaptation class, is about 19%.
- As for the promotion of learning path fluidity within the initial vocational education, it has contributed to :
  - The creation of a passage track (of 23%) between the first two vocational diplomas (i.e. vocational competency certificate: CAP and vocational studies diploma: BEP), which allows pupils to go on for further studies, at college level, leading to a vocational baccalaureate in 28% of the cases.
  - The development of a passage track between vocational colleges and the university: more than 10% of vocational baccalaureate-holders continue their studies in higher technicians sections (STSs).

However, this average fluidity characterising the initial education system, is still hindered by two rigidities:

- A growing gap between a dominant "normal" general education and a less prestigious vocational education considered as means of "rescuing" pupils with education problems.
- A relatively high rate of selectivity and exclusion, especially within the first component of the system. In addition, access to certain curricula traditionally delivered by some prestigious institutions is still limited to the elite with a socially and economically advantaged background.

**4.2.2-** ***Learning path fluidity between initial education and CVT:***

The promotion of learning path fluidity between two traditionally separate systems, initial education and CVT, is central to a real development of fully integrated concept of lifelong learning in France. It will have the advantage of allowing all adults to continue to develop their competencies and knowledge through a variety of learning routes at any time inside and outside their working life.

In spite of the progress made during the last fifteen years in terms of promoting learning path fluidity between the initial education and CVT systems, there is still an increased need for more efforts to be directed towards:

- An increased weight of SD-CVT within the CVT system through the development of "learning path complementarity" between SD-CVT and ED-CVT.
- Extending alternating vocational training system to cases where there will be no age or professional status differentiation. For instance, extending effectively the application of qualification contract regime (CQ) to cover the cases of adults beyond the age of 26 years old.

## CONCLUSION

Through the contribution of LSD-CVT in particular, the performance of SD-CVT, has been observed to be continuously increasing and superior, in most of the cases, to that of ED-CVT. But the growing importance of ED-CVT as a dominant component of CVT in terms of output and financial resources used, is still representing one of the most important factors which continues to undermine the performance of CVT as a whole. In addition, the performance of CVT is still hindered by other important factors, namely:

- The proliferation of ad hoc and experimental specific regimes? within the CVT system? has contributed on one hand, to the dispersion of efforts and means used and on the other, to an increased lack of stability over time in the whole functioning and performance evaluation of the system.
- Insufficient integration in terms of learning path fluidity and complementarity between and within initial education and CVT systems.
- Lack of integration within CVT itself, especially in terms of complementarity-based learning path fluidity, which takes into consideration the dominant characteristics of each component in the system. The SD-CVT sub-system is generally characterised by its contribution to the development of the individuals transversal competencies. As for ED-CVT, it is basically limited to a short term adaptation of workers to punctual and specific occupational competencies.

Therefore, the effectiveness of CVT can only be improved through its development within an integrated education and training system which, as exposed in the last section of this paper, possesses the capacity:

- To promote learning path fluidity and complementarity between and within initial (general and vocational) education and CVT systems;
- To develop transversal and occupational competencies through the development of curricular and delivery flexibility.

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